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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000668

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG AND NEA/ARP

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TAGS: PREL SU OA  
SUBJECT: ARAB DEMOCRACY FOUNDATION HEAD PREVIEWS  
INVOLVEMENT IN DARFUR TALKS

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

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(SBU) KEY POINTS  
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-- Arab Democracy Foundation (ADF) Director Marzen Marzouk told Ambassador November 12 that the GOQ had invited the ADF to participate in the talks with civil society leaders scheduled to take place in Doha later in November.

-- The ADF Director noted that several of the Darfur-based groups expected to participate were members of a network that ADF developed to foster reconciliation there.

-- Marzouk said that militia groups had placed a lot of demands on the GOQ, including financial ones, and expressed his belief that MFA Minister of State Ahmed Al-Mahmoud understands the value of nurturing civil society as a counterweight to the militias.

-- Ambassador pointed out that militia leaders such as Khalil Ibrahim were expected to attend the civil society talks. Marzouk said that the militias were trying to make the case that they had civil society groups of their own, but was hopeful that this argument would not prevail.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- The ADF has done a considerable amount of work with civil society actors in Darfur, organizing a broad network of groups representing diverse interests. Minister of State Al-Mahmoud is wise to have invited ADF to participate, since tapping this resource could bolster the prospects for a sustainable peace. The militias have made their opening gambit to seize control of the civil society track, however, and all parties should proceed with caution so that this critical component of the peace process is not damaged.

End Key Points and Comments.

11. (SBU) Ambassador met November 12 with Marzen Marzouk, Director of the Arab Democracy Foundation (ADF). The meeting was held at Dr. Marzouk's request to discuss his organization's involvement in the Darfur talks to take place in Doha later in November. Also present in the meeting were ADF Deputy Director of Programs Wafa'a Omar and Poloff Caudill.

12. (SBU) Dr. Marzouk informed Ambassador that the GOQ had invited the ADF to participate in the talks along with the representatives of other civil society organizations. He reviewed ADF's development of a broad network of civil

society groups and local stakeholders in Darfur and stressed his belief that deep civil society involvement in the peace process was critical to reaching a sustainable settlement.

¶13. (SBU) Ambassador agreed that civil society involvement was critical, and asked Dr. Marzouk whether those groups coming to Doha for the talks were part of ADF's network, and to what extent ADF would be involved. Dr. Marzouk replied that they were part of the network and that ADF had been consulted by the MFA concerning which groups to invite. He said that there must be a political track (led by MFA) and a civil society track (with organizations doing work on the ground in Darfur), and that both must be working toward the same end.

¶14. (SBU) Ambassador asked Dr. Marzouk for his ideas on how the political and civil society tracks would relate to one another. Dr. Marzouk replied that legitimate civil society actors working in Darfur must have a role in the final settlement. "If they let the political process dominate, they will arrive at a peace settlement without the input of those who have to live with it", he said. He noted that the militias often made financial demands of the GOQ, and said that in his meetings with MFA Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Al-Mahmoud the latter seemed to understand the utility of nurturing civil society in Darfur as a counterweight against the militias.

¶15. (SBU) Ambassador noted that such militia leaders as Khalil Ibrahim were expected to attend the civil society talks, and asked Dr. Marzouk for his insights into why these political actors would be included. Dr. Marzouk replied that the militias were trying to control the civil society track by claiming that they had civil society organizations of their

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own. He expressed his concern over this justification, but was hopeful that the GOQ and Minister of State Al-Mahmoud would reject his argument.

LeBaron